

THE HISTORY OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH OF THE AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION.

(formerly the Australasian Massage Association)

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Early in 1905 a meeting was called in Sydney to discuss the establishment of an organization to protect persons practising the profession of massage. In August of that year the Australasian Massage Association came into being, with Professor Thomas Anderson Stuart as president, and a committee consisting of Dr. Charles Blackburn, Matron Rose Creal (Sydney Hospital), Matron Jean MacMaster (Royal Prince Alfred Hospital), Dr. Roth, Mr.

Unmack, and Mr. Smith, with Miss L. E. Armstrong as honorary secretary and Dr. Grace Boelke as honorary treasurer. Dr. Blackburn (now Sir Charles Bickerton Blackburn, Chancellor of the University of Sydney) has retained his interest through the years and has honoured the New South Wales Branch by becoming its patron.

The Australasian Massage Association was formed originally in an endeavour to put massage on a professional basis, and it

became active in 1906. A large number of persons who had been in practice were admitted to membership after passing examinations conducted by three leading surgeons: Dr. E. T. Thring, Dr. Jarvie Hood, and Dr. Charles Blackburn. Later on it was decided to establish a training course. Training commenced on January 25, 1907, and the course is now the only one in New South Wales which is recognized by the Government. It is not a university course, but the students attend the University of Sydney, by permission of the Senate, for certain subjects, including anatomy, physiology, histology and practical anatomy. The Senate is also most generous in extending to physiotherapy students certain amenities, and representation through the appointment of a member of the Faculty of Science on the Council of the Association. Students are also eligible for benefits under the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme.

An addition to the ordinary subjects of training was made by the provision of a course in prematernity and postmaternity exercises. (These exercises were first taught in Australia, in 1938, by Barbara Mortimer Thomas, an Australian girl who specialized in that subject at St. Thomas' Hospital, London, and was a victim of an air raid on that institution in 1940.) They have proved to be very successful and some members now restrict their professional work to that branch of physiotherapy. A film was made in New South Wales to illustrate the exercises and, through the kind offices of Professor Stallworthy, of Oxford, a copy was shown on the screen at the Congress of the World Confederation for Physical Therapy which was held in London in September, 1953.

Until the Great War, 1914-8, massage received little recognition in Australia. The army authorities refused to include certificated masseurs or masseuses as such in the Australian Imperial Force, despite the representations of the Association, supported, as they were, by the Australian Red Cross Society. The New South Wales Branch thereupon opened a fund, in July, 1915, to raise money to send two members of the Association for service abroad under

the auspices of the British Red Cross Society, which accepted the offer. During this time pressure was brought to bear by all Branches of the Association, and within a few weeks the Minister for Defence and the Director-General of Medical Services had approved of the dispatch of a party to serve for the duration of the war. In August, 1915, six masseurs and twelve masseuses were embarked for service with the Australian hospitals in Egypt and in England; and during that month the Army Massage Reserve was established. In October, 1915, another group of ten masseuses was embarked in *Orsova*. From December, 1915, a masseuse was allotted to and embarked in each of the Australian hospital ships. At the end of the war 103 massage practitioners were attached to the staffs of the various military hospitals in Australia. In view of the likelihood of an increasing demand for workers at home and abroad, an accelerated War Emergencies Massage Course was conducted in New South Wales in 1917-8. Sixty-five applications were received for admission to the course, and fifty-eight students passed, most of whom were enrolled for military service.

In World War II over one hundred physiotherapists from New South Wales saw active service, holding rank as officers attached to the Australian Army Medical Corps. It is noted in the Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services that "the technical side of this branch of physical treatment was developed with an enthusiasm and conviction which left its theory and science, as expounded by the medical services and the profession, far behind".

This impetus naturally stimulated interest in young men and women when about to choose a profession. Whereas in an early training course there were only two students, the trouble nowadays is not how to find enough students but how to regulate the classes to train only the most suitable applicants. The course is open to male and to female students. Very few of the former present themselves, though there appears to be quite a good field for them.

In fact, during the recent war it was not found possible to supply the number of male physiotherapists required by the army authorities. Many blind soldiers have been trained as physiotherapists at St. Dunstan's, London. Some blind students have successfully undertaken the course recently in New South Wales; this is the first venture of the kind in Australia.

Early in 1940 the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Physiotherapy Association, at the request of the local Hospitals Commission, initiated a course of training in occupational therapy, a knowledge of which was urgently required for the treatment of war sufferers. Great difficulties were experienced with regard to premises, materials, and equipment, and a suitable room was not obtained until the end of 1941. Miss Sylvia Docker, a qualified physiotherapist and occupational therapist, was appointed director, and, on February 9, 1942, the Australian Physiotherapy Association opened its doors to twenty-three students of occupational therapy. By the end of 1946 the occupational therapists were sufficiently established to carry on independently and, in September, 1946, the two organizations separated, the Australian Association of Occupational Therapy becoming a separate entity. The Australian Physiotherapy Association had given much thought and labour to the establishment and progress of its

protégé and is very proud of the splendid organization which it sponsored.

For many years it was felt that, as the Association had no authority over non-members, it was essential that steps should be taken to obtain some legal form of control. After many unsuccessful approaches to former Ministers, the Hon. H. P. Fitzsimons, Minister for Health (New South Wales), received a deputation to discuss the need for an Act to protect the practitioners and the public; but it was not until 1946 that the Physiotherapists Registration Act of New South Wales was passed and came into operation.

During the forty-nine years of its existence the New South Wales Branch has had only eight presidents, namely: Professor Anderson Stuart (1905-8), Dr. E. T. Thring (1908-36), Dr. R. V. Graham (1936-9), Dr. John Hoets (1939-45), Dr. D. J. Glissan (1945-7), Dr. John McGeorge (1947-52), Dr. Warwick Stening (1952-3), and Dr. Neville Howard Morgan, who took office in 1954.

At present there are 442 practising physiotherapists on the membership roll, as well as a number who have retired from active practice but give their services in times of epidemic or emergency, such as during outbreaks of poliomyelitis and when unusual shortages of physiotherapists occur.

The Association will celebrate its Jubilee in August of this year.

CONGRATULATIONS.

Members will be pleased to hear of the honour conferred upon Miss Evelyn Paget Evans, General Secretary of the New South Wales Branch. She received the M.B.E. (Member of the Order of the British Empire) in the New Year Honours List. We offer her our sincere congratulations.

Miss Evans has given many years of devoted service to the Australian Physiotherapy Association. She has always been a vigorous champion of the dignity and integrity of the profession. We fully appreciate the honour thus conferred by Her Majesty the Queen on our Association.